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SAPC-10M103 ✓

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Project Director

5 December 1956

SUBJECT : Report to the Field on Loss of U-2

1. Our pilots in both Detachments A and B were still interested as of the date of my last trip abroad in the final diagnosis of the loss of the U-2 in Germany. I believe it would be desirable to send (as a deferred message) a brief statement on this matter. I suggest it make clear that it is now the unanimous opinion of DFSR and Lockheed and yourself that the immediate cause of the accident was a violent explosion in the forward tank in the right wing which detached the rear tank nearly intact in such a way that it struck the empennage and thus contributed to the general disintegration of the aircraft. The account should also, I suggest, refer to Mr. C. L. Johnson's memorandum on the fatigue strength of the U-2 in order to reassure the pilots that this accident could not have been caused by fatigue any more than it was caused by over stressing. I would suggest that the primary cause must have been either gunfire or sabotage. If you believe any of this would be alarming rather than reassuring we could modify the account or reconsider sending any statement to the field. My own feeling is that to reassure the pilots with respect to the functioning of the aircraft itself will more than offset any fears of sabotage. Moreover, such a report will encourage even more careful precautions against sabotage.

RMB
RICHARD M. BISSELL, JR.
Project Director

RMB:djm
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